



# ANTIQUES IN STYLE

## THE DIVINE MAJESTY OF THE SEASON

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PHOTOS Inessa Stewart Antiques



**T**he first cold spell of the season brings a pristine spirit and vibrant energy that makes holiday decorating extraordinary. This is the time of the year that we can indulge in a celebration of our families, homes and our faith. Lavishly decorated, romantically lit and beautifully appointed with family and antique collections, our homes sparkle even more with holiday magic. If you need inspiration for seasonal decorating, antiques provide centuries of divine spirit, romance and drama to ignite your imagination and bring forth eye-catching enchantment.

As a lifelong collector of keepsakes, I decorate with and find antiques both functional and useful, in addition to being aesthetically pleasing - a perfect combination. I instinctively look to these timeless relics for my seasonal decorating as objets d'art to arrange as props for staging my array of settings. With an exquisite layering of timeless antiques, Italian candlesticks, bronze angels, urns, jardinières and statues, I add organic elements like fresh evergreens, florals, topiaries, holly and berries. As my collection has evolved, so have my displays. As a set designer, I create each stage but my venue changes to enable me to retain interest from my audience. I'm always mixing textures, so I like adding different focal or floral elements and subtly changing the look of each vignette.

Holidays are the time of the year to be ever more glamorous, theatrical and opulent. I call it "decorating with the volume turned up."

No matter which style you prefer, the dramatic impact of antiques dictates a singular focus while bringing appealing visual balance to the composition. For example, juxtapose a rustic country snow sleigh or an ancient statue of a saint.

Perhaps even more than china, glassware and linens, the right lighting can set the mood for an enchanted holiday evening. Lighting instantly changes the appearance of a table or room. Antique candlesticks, candelabras and even glasses used as votives can magically transform a room with the wonderful flickering iridescence of candlelight. This magical glow is reflected in the centuries-old patina of antiques, hand-cut crystal and precious metals, enhancing even more the romance of our holiday tableaux.

This holiday season is also the perfect opportunity to display cherished antique and vintage religious artifacts. In my travels I always look for incredible spiritual pieces for use around our homes in decorating, especially during this time of year. For example, an antique 18th century Madonna statue is stunning when surrounded by a collection of antique Italian altar candlesticks. Figures like this are also amazing when displayed with votives and fresh greenery. I love the look of these symbols of faith on mantels, buffets and counters, as they add interest and instant character.

Every year we open our doors to family and dear friends for unforgettable celebrations with lavish holiday décor, and we welcome them with objects that have stories to tell. This time of the year offers an opportunity to interpret the season in very individual ways and start your own memorable family traditions with historic displays that radiate your own personal nostalgic Christmas tales.

